624 blessing the gardens before firing, the seeds before sowing, and the first fruits of a number of crops. He must organise the payment of tribute and labour to the district chief and pass on chiefly orders and requests. His privileges include the right to personal service from younger relatives and tribute of beer and/or meat. Primarily, however, the position is valued not for economic advantage but for the authority it brings, the command over a small following and the favour of a chief. The sanctions for this authority consist mainly in the headman's popularity, the strength of kinship ties between him and the villagers and their belief that it is dangerous to allow an elder relative to die while cherishing a sense of injury. Ultimately, of course, the headman's power depends on the support of his territorial chief and nowadays of the British Administration.

621 The functions of the different types of Bemba chief differ only in degree from those of the headman. Like a headman, a chief is in charge of his
622 own village, his *musumba*, and he tries to maintain and augment this community by acquiring a reputation for popularity and generosity. A chief's village in the old days was described as having thousands of inhabitants. Big chiefs' villages observed by Richards in 1934 had 400 to 600 huts. They were divided into quarters (*fitenta*) ruled over by loyal supporters of the chief, known as *bafilolo*.

622 Besides administering his own village the chief was responsible for mak-
ing and confirming the appointment of headmen; and presiding over a court
[692] composed of advisers mainly drawn from his own village. Witchcraft cases
[681] had to be brought to a chief and only the more important among them could administer the poison ordeal by *mwafi*. The chief could in the old days punish by savage mutilations and by selling a man into slavery. Economically the chief was responsible for initiating agricultural activities by performing the necessary rite at the time of tree-cutting, sowing or harvesting. With the tribute labour at his disposal he made big gardens and built gran-
[721] aries from which he fed his courtiers, messengers and workers. The chief initiated military raids and other forms of warfare, and the great Bemba chiefs maintained their monopoly of Arab guns which they traded for slaves. Bemba country was, in fact, an area of strong centralised government. The chieftains of the Aushi, Unga and other associated tribelets were on a much smaller scale and weaker in political organisation.

[789] But the most important and characteristic activities of the Bemba chiefs are ritual. They are reckoned to have in their own persons power to bless and curse. They have to be protected from contact with death and to keep
[763] sex taboos of various kinds for the welfare of the whole territory. It is probable that the Bemba Paramount Chief in the old days might have been described as a "divine king" in Frazer's sense of the word; he was strangled
[769] when on the point of death so that his spirit should pass into the land. The Bemba chief derives his ritual power from the fact that he has succeeded to the names of dead chiefs and is thus enabled to call on a long line of ancestral spirits. Chiefs possess sacred relics - usually stools - which are
622 known as *babenye* and kept in special huts protected by "wives of the dead"
778 or descendants of wives of earlier chiefs. An approach to the ancestral spirits is made at these shrines. Chiefs also sacrifice at the deserted shrines of their predecessors (*nfuba*) and at other spirit centres in the area.

Much of their power depends on the keeping of sex taboos and the

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

twelve uniformed messengers, *kapasus*, and for the rest they go short of service.

(*b*) *Military*. There was no general military organization in this tribe, but attached to each big court were one or two captains (*bashika*). Some of these were hereditary, with ritual functions connected with war magic, and others appointed at the chief's will. They now act as specially trusted messengers.

(*c*) *Judicial*. There is no fixed composition to a Bemba court, although its procedure is laid down by custom. At a small chief's court, the elderly men of the village attend, while the *bafilolo* act as advisers at the big *imisumba*. Cases go on appeal from sub-chief to chief, chief to paramount, and in the event of a case of extreme difficulty presenting itself, the Citimukulu can summon from their villages some of his hereditary priests or councillors, the *bakabilo* (cf. below). Witnesses are brought by each party to a case and are marshalled by the *bafilolo*. The senior man present claps as each point is made to mark the recognition of the court, and the chief himself finally sums up and gives judgement. The advisers speak when asked a point of precedent or law, and influence the chief's final decision by black looks or alternatively enthusiastic clappings of the hand.

(*d*) *Advisory*. There is no council or meeting of all the adult men of the tribe for special occasions, as among many Southern Bantu. Sub-chiefs have a panel of village elders and relatives to advise them, while the biggest territorial chiefs have hereditary officials who combine political and judicial with ritual functions. In the case of the paramount, these officials—the *bakabilo*—number between thirty-five and forty and form an advisory council on special matters of State. The *bakabilo* have been described as having descent as long as that of the chief himself in many cases and possess sacred relics in their own rights. The power of these relics is so strong that the Citimukulu is not permitted to pass through their villages for fear that one chieftainship should harm the other. *Bakabilo* are immune from tribute, wore special feather head-dresses in the old days, and even now claim special respect equal to that given to a chief when travelling about the country. They call themselves *Fwe Babemba* ('We, the Babemba'), may not leave the central territory (Lubemba) for long, must be buried within the royal district, and keep sex taboos similar to those of the chiefs. They succeed by a special accession

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

since the break-up of the whole settlement may become inevitable in such circumstances.

There are no other organized bodies of Europeans in this area —no big bodies of farmers or settlers, for instance. But it may be said that all Europeans are in a sense in a position of authority. They all have the sanction of wealth and the power of employing a following. All have the high social status that enables them to talk to a chief as an equal, or more usually as an inferior, and all are believed by the natives to be backed, whether right or wrong, by the administrative officers of the district however unjustifiably.

Besides these new authorities introduced into the political arena, the power of the Bemba chief is inevitably reduced by his economic position, which must have grown increasingly bad since the first days of European occupation. The Bemba rulers were never rich compared to a number of African potentates. Theirs is a poor country. They possess no cattle which could be converted to money under modern conditions; the ivory of their country no longer belongs to them, nor their mineral rights. Land has no financial value as yet, and the salaries given to chiefs have always been low compared to the income, say, of the paramount chief of the Barotse.[1] Added to this, the service on which the Bemba chiefs depended is cut down by half or more by the absence of men at the mines, and what remains is often given unwillingly. These chiefs never apparently exacted court fines as a regular thing, after the fashion of the cattle-owning Bantu, and have not yet put a levy on the earnings of men away at the mines, as has been done in some parts of South Africa.

In view of these facts, it may be asked how the power of the *Bena ŋandu* survived at all up till 1929, when a determined effort was made to restore it. Partly because of their closely knit kinship structure, but also, I think, because of the strength of the supernatural beliefs on which their authority was so largely based. These were certainly weakened by the introduction of Christianity and the prevention or discouragement of many tribal rites, but it is impossible to treat them as mere survivals at the present day. Even young men are affected by such beliefs. For much the same reasons, the chiefs' courts continued to function alongside of the

[1] The Barotse chief receives an annual subsidy of £1,700, together with £850 from the British South Africa Company and £1,500 from the Zambesi saw-mills, as compared to the £60 a year of the Bemba paramount.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

District Commissioner's courts in spite of thirty years or so of non-recognition. Natives took there the cases they believed the European magistrates did not understand, i.e. ritual matters, affairs with their roots in past history, and certain civil actions. Thus there were still some functions which the people believed the Bemba chief could perform better than all the new white authorities in the territory, besides the great historic tradition behind his authority.

Effects of the 1929 *Ordinances*. By the Native Authority and Native Courts Ordinances of 1929 a form of Indirect Rule was introduced into Northern Rhodesia, the power of the authorities then instituted being still further extended and more closely defined by a subsequent Ordinance of 1936. Chiefs, and in some cases councils of chiefs, were constituted as native authorities by these measures. They were given jurisdiction over definite territories, and encouraged to issue orders on matters of hygiene, bush-burning, the movement of natives, the constitution of villages, &c. Native courts were also recognized and given jurisdiction over all cases except witchcraft, murder, issues involving Europeans, &c. The chiefs were given salaries, small in actual fact and quite inadequate to the needs of an administrator at the present time,[1] yet in the eyes of natives, who are unaccustomed to see large sums of money at any one time, they were substantial marks of Government favour and often described as such. Clerks and *kapasus* (messengers), at exceedingly low salaries, were also attached to the courts. No financial control was given until recently (1936), when native treasuries were set up.[2]

As far as I could judge,[3] this new policy certainly did much to restore the personal prestige of the chiefs. The loss of an authority which was largely based on ritual was compensated for to some extent by the evident support of the Government. Most Bemba realize clearly that their chiefs are still merely servants of the Administration and note the fact that they cannot imprison or try the most important cases, and that their judgements are liable to be reversed, but they often commented to me on what seemed to

[1] Citimukulu receives £60 per annum, Mwamba £50, and the other chiefs less in proportion. For details showing the inadequacy of these amounts cf. my 'Tribal Government in Transition', *Journ. African Society*, vol. xxxiv, 1935.

[2] The Bemba Treasury had a balance of £143 in 1938 on a sum of £1,303 to be divided between six districts. See *Report* cited on p. 114.

[3] I arrived in the country the year after the introduction of these measures.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

177 622 692 them evident signs of favour bestowed by the new policy on their rulers. As we saw, the judicial machinery of the Bemba never really disappeared with the institution of white courts, but the legal recognition of the chiefs' courts by the 1929 Ordinance certainly increased the latter's status tremendously. Successive Government reports have described the new native courts as functioning well, while few charges of excessive fines or hearing fees have been made against the chiefs. Such complaints as I heard seemed to come mainly from educated natives belonging to other areas, particularly from Nyasaland, who found themselves subject for the first time to Bemba law. In the legislative field, determined efforts were made by the district officials to restore the self-confidence of the native authorities and to encourage them, not only to resume functions of government they had lost, but also to take on new tasks, such as the issue of orders as to hygiene, &c. In fact, as regards the personal position of the Bemba chiefs, it may be said that there was a gradual increase in status due to Government support, added to a respect and fear which had never been entirely lost. Their power is in many ways surprising, in view of their poverty, their lack of means to enforce any decisions taken, and the presence in their territories of other authorities in command of their subjects and in particular of large numbers of Christians bound by codes that are not recognized in the chiefs' courts.[1]

177 622 642 645 Apart from the chief's own position, it is necessary to review the political system as a whole. How far was the old machinery of Government re-established by the introduction of the 1929 Ordinances? And, more important still, is such a machinery adapted to the new needs of the tribe? The answer to the first question is a decided, 'No'. The whole balance of authority has been altered, partly by the changed economic position of the chief and partly by lack of Government recognition. We saw that the executive and judicial officials on whom the chief relied were kept together by hope of rewards and food and in some cases in virtue of their religious functions. Nowadays the chief is less able to feed his councillors, principally owing to the decay of the tribute labour system. He does not consider himself obliged to distribute

[1] Some missionary societies have followed the Government policy and have invited chiefs to take a part in school education committees, &c.; others have viewed any increase in the chief's authority as a retrograde step.